

# K-12 Evaluation

## Mission

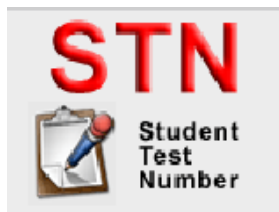
To provide feedback to parents, educators, and policymakers on the quality of educational services being provided to students, to provide research-based direction to state policymakers, and to provide clear directives to local school officials on where their efforts are increasing the academic achievement of students as well as where they must improve.

## Summary of Activities

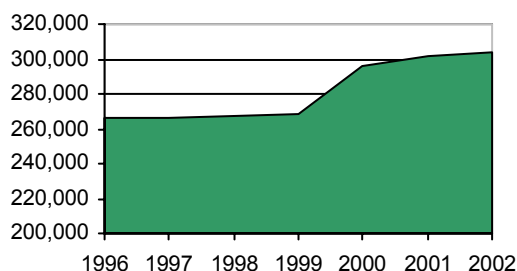


The most prominent component of K-12 Evaluation is Indiana's large-scale assessment program, Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+). Administered by the **Department of Education** (DOE) and local schools, the ISTEP+ assessments provide the basis for program evaluation through the identification of strengths and weaknesses in meeting Indiana's academic standards. This identification occurs at the student, school, corporation, and state levels, and provides the basis for Indiana's Performance-Based Accreditation (PBA) system. During this biennium, evaluation has focused on the shift from the PBA system to the accountability system under P.L. 221.

The most significant effort has been the successful startup of the Student Test Number (STN) system. This system provides the necessary foundation to accurately report on the achievement of students served by Indiana schools as is required by both P.L. 221 and the No Child Left Behind Act. The STN system begins a fundamental change in how information will be collected from schools. The 2002-03 school year was the first year of a four-year conversion of all state reports. This major effort will consolidate the department's data collection efforts and eliminate duplicative data collections. Student Test Numbers have allowed Indiana schools to use pre-printed identification labels on ISTEP+ tests, a change that virtually eliminates the need to "bubble" student information. This innovation dramatically increased the accuracy of the student data and the speed with which tests could be processed.



**Number of Students Tested Through the State ISTEP+ Program**



## External Factors

The demand for high standards and accountability has increased the use and scrutiny of large-scale assessment programs. High-stakes graduation tests increase the public profile of large-scale assessments as well as the steps that must be taken to develop a test that will withstand legal scrutiny, as Indiana's Graduation Qualifying Examination (GQE) recently did. At the national level, the No Child Left Behind Act has created an increased demand for large-scale assessment programs that has resulted in demand pushing supply limits. Test publishers struggle to supply and meet the increased demand for quality and timely evaluation programs. In Indiana, the Department of Education strives to offer the most current and effective form of assessments, which include comparisons of Indiana students to students in other states, across the nation (through the National Assessment of Educational Progress or NAEP assessment), and around the world (through the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study or TIMSS assessment).

## Evaluation and Accomplishments

The 2002 Graduation Qualifying Examination (GQE) results were returned prior to Thanksgiving, a 45 percent reduction in turnaround time from the beginning of the GQE program. The testing time for the Grade 3, Grade 6, and Grade 8 ISTEP+ examinations has been reduced by an average of 37 percent.

The Fall 2002 ISTEP examinations for Grades 3, 6, and 8 were the first to assess the Indiana Academic Standards adopted by the Education Roundtable and State Board of Education in 2000. These standards have been widely recognized as being among the best in the nation and represent a new era of higher achievement expectations for Indiana students.

The new tests, as aligned to these higher standards, required the setting of passing scores for both English and mathematics. 144 teachers from across the state worked in a "standard setting" process for three days to recommend both a "PASS" and a "PASS+" level of performance for Indiana's students.



These new scores have been placed on a scale that will allow the direct comparison of student achievement from one year to the next. The "vertical" scale is critical for the implementation of P.L. 221. It will allow the required measurement of student improvement as they move from one grade to the next.

## Plans for the Biennium

Item development for the next generation of the GQE will continue in English and mathematics and begin for 7<sup>th</sup> grade science. Current freshmen (Grade 9) will be the first group of students required to show mastery of the new Indiana Academic Standards as a requirement for earning their high school diploma.

